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An Evaluation of a Summer Reading Program at a Public Middle School in a Southeastern State

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An Evaluation of a Summer Reading Program at a Public Middle School in a Southeastern State

By
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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Michael Waiksnis under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

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Academic achievement loss during the summer is an established fact that is backed by a dearth of research. Most students generally lose academic ground in math during the summer. However, summer learning loss in reading is not shared by all subgroups of students. Students living in poverty lose, on average, 3 months of academic learning while other students gain or stay the same over the summer months. This is of major concern to schools and districts as they struggle to close the achievement gap.

A middle school in a southeastern state created a reading program that guaranteed access to books over the summer. Selected students were given 12 books at the end of the school year for 2 years. Two of the books came from the school's summer reading list, but the others were based on student choice. The program coordinators provided minimal support to the students when they choose their books. There were no other student support structures in place.

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine the extent to which access to books is associated with reducing summer learning loss in reading and to determine to what extent participation in the program increased reading motivation and student perception of the value of reading.

While the findings of the program evaluation did not support the author's anticipated outcomes, this research offers plenty to the existing research on interventions geared towards reducing or eliminating summer learning loss in reading. While there is a solid research base that proves summer learning loss occurs and is an issue facing our schools, there is little research on interventions that may address the issue of summer learning loss in reading. This program evaluation builds off of the existing literature and shows the need for additional student support structures in addition to providing guaranteed access to books.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Students often lose academic ground over the course of the summer break from school. The effect is multiplied over time and it widens the socioeconomic achievement gap. Students from low socioeconomic families experience a larger loss of learning over the summer. Barbara Heyns's (1978) seminal work solidified the notion that learning gaps among socioeconomic status subgroups widen during the summer. The learning loss occurs at higher levels in reading than in mathematics. Summer learning loss occurs each summer and has a profound impact as a student moves through his/her educational career (Heyns). Most students, regardless of socioeconomic class, lose academic ground in mathematics over the summer (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007b). However, research on seasonal learning loss has provided reliable evidence that students from the lower socioeconomic class lose approximately three more months of academic achievement in reading than their peers from the middle class (Allington et al., 2010). The prevailing theory on this subject-area discrepancy is that students from the middle class have more opportunities to practice reading in the home and that families are more likely to promote literacy rather than practice and promote mathematics (Cooper, Nye, Chartlon, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996). This may suggest that their families are more comfortable in providing support in reading over mathematics.

While the research on summer learning loss is clear and established, there is not a wealth of research on what can be done to mitigate this loss (Alexander et al., 2007a). Schools across the nation are grappling with the reality of improving the test scores of all students and ensuring they reach certain benchmarks set by the No Child Left Behind legislation. This study gauged the effectiveness of a school-based program designed to

mitigate summer learning loss and improve student reading motivation.

Summer learning loss is not isolated to one occurrence or one particular circumstance. The learning loss experienced each summer compounds the consequences over time (Cooper et al., 1996). This problem occurs at schools across the country and it is happening at a public middle school in the southeastern United States. What do experts in learning suggest accounts for this seasonal learning loss?

Access to books has been identified as a major barrier to becoming a good reader (Cooper et al., 1996). Students living in poverty face numerous barriers to access books, including lack of appropriate books in their school library, lack of transportation to the public library in the summer, lack of books in the home, and unsafe environments that prevent students from walking to their public library. Other potential factors that may promote summer learning loss such as lack of access to parents or positive adult role models during the day, lack of cultural experiences, and lack of travel opportunities are beyond the control of the school. While there are theories regarding minimizing summer learning loss other than providing access to books, the faculty in this study decided it was within their power to provide guaranteed access to books.

The school literacy committee determined the most cost-effective and logistically feasible intervention would be one that provides guaranteed access to books. They came to this conclusion after studying literacy and implementing a school-wide approach to content area reading. This is a program evaluation of a voluntary summer reading program that aims to reduce or eliminate summer learning loss in reading as measured by the reading portion of the South Carolina version of the Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. The study also determined to what extent student participation in the program increased reading motivation and student perception of

reading value as measured by the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile survey which has two groupings, one that measures self-concept as a reader and another that measures the perception of the value of reading.

It is important to note that there are other theories of what causes summer learning loss. Many of these theories focus on lack of opportunities for learning in the summer for children living in poverty, such as going to museums, visiting historical sites, and other similar activities. However, the school faculty decided that access to books was something they could provide so they decided to focus on this theory of why learning loss may occur in the summer.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which access to books is associated with reducing summer learning loss in reading. The study also determined to what extent participation in this program increased reading motivation and student perception of the value of reading. The school analyzed data that demonstrated the majority of students, especially students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch, were losing academic ground in reading over the summer. In an effort to address this problem, the school leadership team began researching possible causes and interventions to the summer learning loss happening with students from this school. There were several literacy-based efforts in place at the school which contributed to the background knowledge needed by the leadership team and teachers to address the issue. This included a school-wide literacy plan that had specific literacy comprehension strategies and guaranteed time spent reading during the school day.

Teachers at the school received a wealth of professional development on reading and, more specifically, reading in the content area. This included professional

development in multiple literacy strategies such as supporting silent reading in class, SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review), reading notebooks, and individual reading conferences. It included professional development sessions led by the principal, instructional coach, and fellow teachers. The instructional coach, eight teachers, and the principal attended a series on high-performing literacy classes that were taught by the South Carolina State Department of Education and focused on not only reading in the English Language Arts class but literacy across all content areas. The school literacy plan included a component that focused on content area-based reading instruction. Teachers were given articles that were directly tied to their content standards.

This allowed teachers to focus on their content while allowing students to work on their reading skills. Teachers were also taught how to find articles tied to their content standards. The school leadership team built capacity among the teachers in literacy instruction, which is important because it demonstrated the leadership team's commitment to literacy and how it impacts the overall achievement of students. The adults in the building value reading and the impact it has on overall school performance. This background information helped in understanding the capacity of the school faculty to choose and implement the summer reading program.

While the research available was limited, the faculty did find programs that encouraged summer reading in a variety of different ways. Since the faculty had focused on creating a culture of reading, the leadership team decided to continue with this effort. There are many examples of what the faculty did to create this culture of literacy. All teachers had signs that showed what they were currently reading on their door. The student-run school news show often showed book trailers and book reviews created by and for students. Brightly colored signs and banners promoting the importance of

reading were placed throughout the school. Summer reading *pre-parties* were held that focused on promoting summer reading. The team then decided they needed to work to ensure as many students as possible had guaranteed access to books. If students who were already reluctant readers had to overcome obstacles simply to get books, the leadership team knew most of them would stop even trying to read for pleasure over the summer. The school being studied developed a 2-year program with the goal of decreasing or eliminating the summer learning loss experienced by students in reading and increasing reading motivation among the students in the program.

Background and Significance of the Problem

Many students lose academic ground over the summer. All students generally suffer a loss in mathematics, but economically disadvantaged students face a larger loss in reading. Cooper et al. (1996) found that "Middle class students appeared to gain on grade level equivalent reading recognition tests over summer while lower-class students lost on them" (p. 227). Summer learning loss has long been discussed but it has failed to impact policy (Cooper et al.). The academic achievement gap is a major problem in the United States. Summer learning loss clearly adds to this gap (Alexander et al., 2007b; Heyns, 1978). School leaders need research that clearly shows how to mitigate this loss. This is what is lacking in the current literature – specific and actionable programs and interventions that can stymie summer learning loss.

Summer learning loss is occurring at a middle school in the southeastern United States. The school has a traditional middle school structure. Students are placed on teams and have three or four core teachers each day. The school serves approximately 800 students in Grades 6-8. It is considered a neighborhood school that also accepts students who choose to attend for a specific program. Approximately 5% of the student

population is assigned to the school by choice and lives outside the attendance boundary.

This is a high poverty school with a poverty rate of 74% as defined by the state. This has been increasing at an accelerated rate for the past 6 years. The school had a poverty rate of 35% during the 2005-2006 school year. Approximately 50% of the student population was Caucasian, 35% was African American, and 15% was Hispanic. The school places an emphasis on literacy and has a school-wide literacy plan that allows students to develop literacy skills in all content areas. The faculty at the school has received sustained professional development in literacy development over the past 2 school years. The school-wide literacy plan forms an expectation that all teachers are responsible for developing subject-specific literacy skills in all classes.

This school still experiences summer learning loss among its students, even with the emphasis placed on literacy. On the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), students from South Carolina had an average score of 257 on the eighth-grade reading assessment. This average score is lower than the national average of 262. Students from this school scored below students from similar schools on the reading section of the 2010 Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS). The State of South Carolina uses this standardized assessment to determine if students are meeting established benchmarks of performance. This assessment is used for compliance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This school is similar to many schools across the United States. There is an achievement gap among socioeconomic groups, and summer learning loss is prevalent (Alexander et al., 2007b).

Table 1 shows how the school in the study compares on standardized testing in reading to other schools within the district as well as schools outside the district in South Carolina. It is important to understand that this school has placed an emphasis on

improving reading achievement scores, and the data are mixed. There is a small amount of growth from 2010-2011 in certain areas but overall the trend is down. The trend for the district and state were very similar to the individual school. Through this data analysis, the school determined to look at summer learning loss as a factor in the reading achievement of its students.

Table 1

Data Comparison

6th Grade - % passing School		6th Grade - % passing District	6th Grade - % passing State
	Standard 2 Informational texts	Standard 2 Informational texts	Standard 2 Informational texts
2009	84.1	82.4	81
2010	79.5	79.8	77.8
2011	83.1	82.2	81.5
7th Grade - % passing School		7th Grade - % passing District	7th Grade - % passing State
	Standard 2 Informational Texts	Standard 2 Informational texts	Standard 2 Informational texts
2009	80.8	81.6	80.7
2010	76.6	79.9	79.5
2011	63	69.3	67.6
8th Grade - % passing School		8th Grade - % passing District	8th Grade - % passing State
	Standard 2 Informational Texts	Standard 2 Informational Texts	Standard 2 Informational Texts
2009	80.9	80.8	76.1
2010	78.6	75.2	70.8
2011	72.3	76.7	73.6

Research Questions

In an effort to close the achievement gap, this faculty decided to create a program to keep students engaged in reading over the summer. In a 2004 study, researchers found that students who read four or five books over the summer could prevent summer

learning loss (Allington et al., 2010). The school faculty also hoped giving students books for the creation of or addition to their home library would increase their motivation to read. The research questions of this study were to determine the following:

1. To what extent is guaranteed access to books associated with reducing summer learning loss in reading, as measured by Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)?

2. To what extent did participation in this program increase reading motivation and student perception of the value of reading, as measured by the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile?

The independent variable in the first research question was providing access to books. Conceptually, the idea was to ensure that students have access to books. This eliminated the issue of students not having access to books at home. Operationally, students were chosen based on teacher recommendation on the basis of being identified as reluctant readers. Eighty-three percent of the students in the program qualified for the free/reduced lunch program.

The dependent variable was the student's test score on the MAP. Conceptually, the idea was to determine the amount of summer learning loss experienced by the students who were given books the previous spring. Operationally, the spring (end of school year) reading score was compared to the student's score on the following school year's fall (beginning of school year) reading score. This measurement of progress occurred in each year of the 2-year program.

The independent variable for the second research question was the same as in the first question. The dependent variable for the second question was the student's score on the reading inventory that determined his/her attitude towards reading. Conceptually, the idea was to determine if providing the books would develop a stronger sense in the

student of being a confident reader. Operationally, the student's score on the reading inventory administered in the spring was compared to the student's score on the same inventory administered in the spring of the following school year.

This study adds to the current body of research knowledge on summer learning loss and ways to possibly decrease its effect on students. It also adds to the body of current research on student reading motivation. This is a relatively new area of focus and there has not been a significant amount of research on the topic. Public schools across the United States feel continued pressure to increase the scores of students on their state-selected standardized tests. These assessments are the tool the public uses to judge schools. This school decided to explore the effects of summer learning loss after its increased focus on literacy produced positive results but not at the rate for which they hoped.

Organization of the Study

In this study, the reader will find a comprehensive review of the literature that pertained to summer reading loss and reading motivation. This will assist the reader in understanding what research has already been conducted on the topics. The methodology of the study is explained in thorough detail in order to provide a clear description of the process. This explains how students were selected for the program, how the program operated, and how this current study measured the research questions. The reader will find a detailed analysis of the data of the voluntary summer reading program and specifically how those results relate to the research questions. The author of the study drew conclusions based on the data and research questions. Finally, limitations and recommendations for further study are provided. This study looked at the current literature and then added specific research and literature on methods that have been

developed in an effort to reduce or eliminate summer learning loss in schools.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review of the literature gives the reader a comprehensive look at the current literature on summer learning loss and reading motivation. It is organized in a manner that will first establish summer learning loss as a fact that many schools are facing today. The existing literature clearly shows socioeconomic status has a very large impact on summer learning loss, especially in reading. The literature review then offers insight into how English Language Learners are impacted by summer learning loss. This literature review also confirms that summer learning loss is indeed a problem in the local community where the summer reading program took place. The review of the literature then looks at programs that were analyzed based on the type of support that was provided in addition to providing guaranteed access to books. The first program only provided books. Other programs offered increasingly more support in addition to the books. Finally, the review of the literature looks at the existing research on reading motivation and reading self-efficacy.

Students often lose academic ground over the course of the summer break from school. The effect is multiplied over time and it widens the achievement gap among students as students from low socioeconomic families experience a larger loss of learning over the summer (Heyns, 1978). As this review of the literature demonstrates, more and more attention is being focused on summer learning.

Research indicates students generally lose academic ground over the summer (Cooper et al., 1996). Cooper et al. (1996) conducted a large-scale study that found middle-class students gained a grade-level equivalent on reading recognition tests over the summer while lower-class students lost academic ground on them. “On average, summer vacations created a gap of about 3 months between middle and lower-class

students" (Cooper et al., p. 261). Cooper et al. did not find evidence of any other factor other than socioeconomic status impacting reading achievement loss over the summer. This large meta-analysis is referenced in most of the literature on summer learning loss. It is a seminal piece of literature pertaining to summer learning and summer learning loss.

While the data clearly demonstrate the loss students experience over the summer, there is a lack of research on how it should be addressed. This is not a problem of not knowing the problem; this has been clearly established. However, research needs to move in the area of what interventions will successfully address the problem. Harris Cooper (2003) suggested three ways to combat summer learning loss. They include extending the school year, providing summer school, and modifying the school calendar (Cooper). These are very costly alternatives and much more expensive than providing books.

It is important to note that summer learning loss easily can be under or over reported. Generally, students in U.S. schools are tested in the fall and spring each school year. However, the tests usually are not administered on the first and last day of school. Thus, the period defined as summer usually includes some time spent in school. This can actually add up to a month or more of school time. Therefore, the general time frame used to determine summer learning loss actually includes some instructional time (Alexander et al., 2007a). "Sixty-two percent of high SES children were enrolled in a college preparatory program in high school versus just thirteen percent of low SES children" (Alexander et al., 2007b, p. 171). This clearly points to the long-term effect of summer learning loss. If this time is controlled for in some manner, it would potentially show even more summer learning loss.

Summer learning loss in the early foundational years perpetuates across a child's

educational career. The learning loss each year compounds over time and further increases the achievement gap among socioeconomic classes. Alexander et al. (2007b) argued that since achievement scores at any level predict success at the next level, this has devastating consequences. Using this theory, it is possible that summer learning loss follows the child all the way into the workplace (Alexander et al., 2007b). This clearly has important implications for public education as well as the future economic success of students.

Socioeconomic family status has a direct impact on the rate of summer learning gain or loss. Data have shown that students from low-income families lose ground in reading while students from middle class families remain constant in reading achievement over the summer (Benson & Borman 2010).

A large-scale study on summer learning was conducted in Baltimore that started in 1982 and followed students from the first grade until age 22. The Baltimore school district is in a large, industrialized city with many low-income students. While this study was limited to this single district, it is a large urban district, similar to many across the nation. The unique characteristic of this research is the time scale. It followed students from first grade to the age of 22. This provided rich data for the questions that are central to the summer learning and achievement gap research. The study included 790 participants who were randomly selected from schools within the district. Different achievement tests were used to gauge learning or loss and they were held as constant as possible. Summer school was not mandatory in the district at the time and researchers felt this was beneficial as it would further isolate the impact of summer on learning gains or losses. The figure below demonstrates summer learning loss of students in the Baltimore school study (Donahue & Miller, 2008).

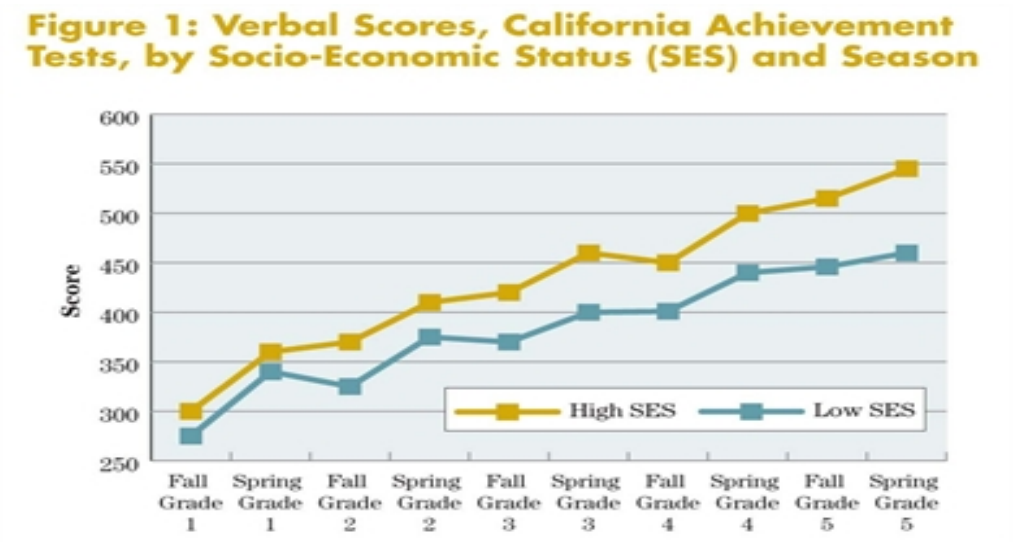

Figure 1. Verbal Scores by SES and Season.

This research indicates little difference in reading comprehension gains between income groups during the school year. The low-income students keep up with students from more advantaged homes. The low-income students cumulatively gained 191.3 points while the higher socioeconomic students (SES) gained 187 points over 5 years. However, students from the high SES group continued to gain each summer while the students from the lower SES group lost ground most summers (Alexander et al., 2007b). Over time, this leads to an ever-widening achievement gap based on socioeconomic status. There is some discrepancy in the literature on summer learning, but one pattern is clear. "Results differ, too, but the general pattern seen in BSS is fairly representative, and for us, one fact stands out: disadvantaged children come closer to keeping up during the school year than they do during the summer months" (Alexander et al., 2007b, p.20).

Much of the achievement gap is in place when students begin school. In this study, about one-third of the achievement gap in the ninth grade was already in place when students entered the first grade. The remaining portion of the achievement gap

present in the ninth grade forms between first and ninth grade. The largest single component of the gap is the cumulative summer learning gap from the 5 elementary school years (Alexander et al., 2007b). As discussed earlier, students living in poverty gain more academic ground during the school year. This further displays the importance of summer learning. The students in the study lost ground overall in high school as compared to middle and upper class students but not by a significant margin. The data from this research underscore the importance of a student's life outside of school. One-third of the achievement gap exists before a student steps inside a school. Figure 2 below is from the Baltimore school study and underscores the prevalence of this issue. (Alexander et al., 2007b).

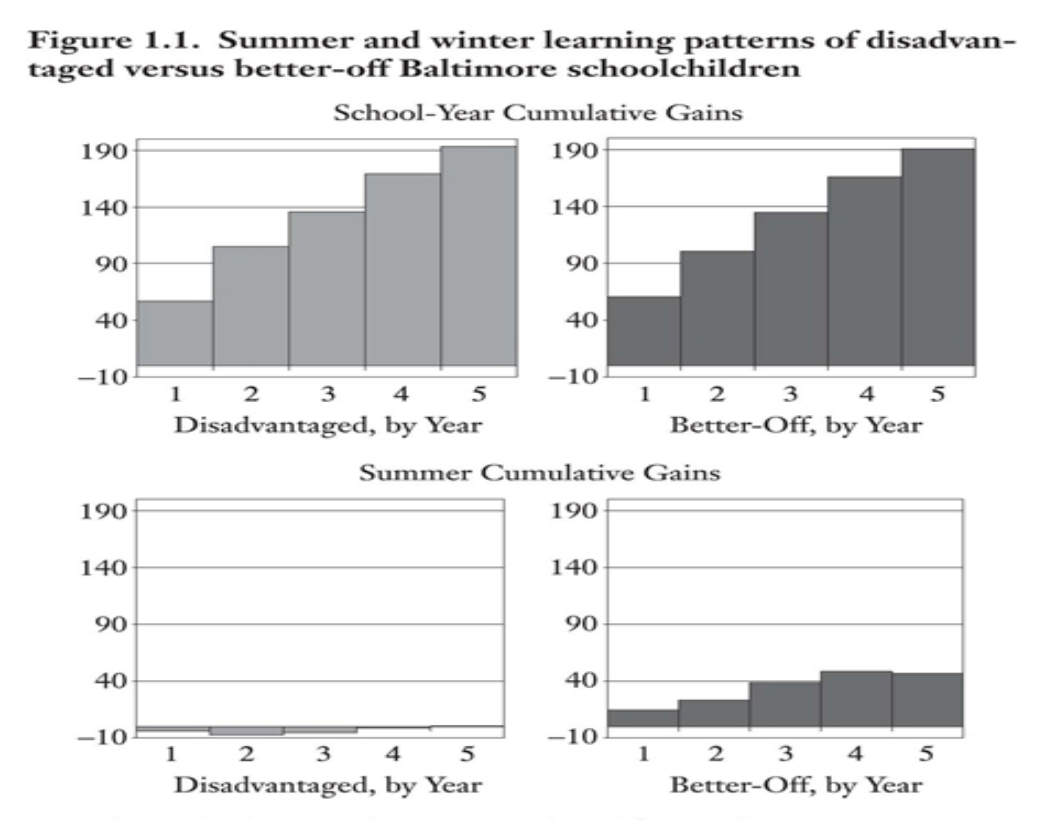

Figure 2. Seasonal Learning Patterns.

Much of the remainder of the gap present in ninth grade is a result of summer – the time spent outside of school. This clearly points out that most of the achievement gap present at the start of high school is due to out-of-school experiences (Alexander et al., 2007a). The researchers feel these data suggest the need for year-round supplemental educational programs. They do not believe these programs should mirror the school year or traditional summer school experiences. They also feel that enrichment activities, such as visiting museums, science centers, parks, festivals, and the like, should be part of these summer programs.

These are the types of activities children from middle and higher socioeconomic class get to experience, and if we want to close the gap, students from lower socioeconomic classes need these experiences as well. Summer programs should be designed to give these opportunities and to be enjoyable for the students. This is an opportunity to give these students the feel of success in school (Alexander et al., 2007b). The current and past literature clearly show the impact summer learning loss has on students. This is a problem for all students and particularly students living in poverty.

While the research shows most students living in poverty lose academic ground during the summer, this does not hold true for all students living in poverty. A study was done in an attempt to find students in the Baltimore school study who defied the general pattern of summer loss. The researchers felt if they were able to identify these students, an attempt could be made to determine what factors separated these students. They used the term ESL – exceptional summer learner – to describe these students. The criteria used to determine ESL was students who scored at the same level or above of higher socioeconomic students for three of four summers during elementary school (Slates, Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2012).

For the comparison of data, the study looked at functional and structural variables. Structural capital refers to the physical presence of family members in a child's life. Functional capital refers to strong parental involvement in their children's lives. The study demonstrated that families of ESLs possessed more resources than the families of other students living in poverty. There are several advantages that families of ESLs in reading and math share (Slates et al., 2012).

> Reading and math ESL families share several structural advantages, including greater likelihood, on average, to have two parents present and have a mother who was not a teenager at the birth of her first child. Two parent households may be advantageous because ESLs are able to draw on human capital of both parents, and, not being teen moms, ESL mothers do not face the practical obstacles and stresses associated with early parenthood. (Slates et al., 2012, p. 174)

ESL families also were found to have several functional social capital structures in common. Parents of ESLs were found to be significantly more likely to take their child to the library during the summer and check out books. These parents were found to spend more time reading to their child as well. During the school year, they held higher expectations for their child and checked their homework more frequently. These behaviors during the school year are very likely to carry over into the summer months (Slates et al., 2012). Figure 3 compares several components of families among ESLs and other families of low socioeconomic status. The figure also includes the data of families from higher socioeconomic classes for comparison purposes.

Comparison of Family Socioeconomic Status (SES) Components

	% of Mothers With at Least HS Degree		% of Fathers With at Least HS Degree		Average Mother's Occupational Status Rank		Average Father's Occupational Status Rank		% of Students With at Least Some Lunch Subsidy	
Students	%	*n*	%	*n*	*M*	*n*	*M*	*n*	%	*n*
Reading										
ESLs	35.71	15	51.43	18	21.51	35	22.97	31	95.45	42
Other low SES	32.14	72	41.33	62	22.94	194	23.34	150	95.34	225
Math										
ESLs	30.19	16	37.84	14	22.65	46	24.01	36	92.59	50
Other low SES	33.18	71	43.62	65	22.70	185	23.09	145	96.04	218
High SES	98.32	176	98.60	141	51.72	148	54.76	144	13.13	21

Note. M = mean. HS = high school. ESL = Exceptional Summer Learners.

Figure 3. Family Socioeconomic Status (SES) Components.

The amount of summer activities the students participated in was analyzed as well. The assumption was that the participation in a variety of activities would be an academic advantage to students for ESLs compared to their low SES peers. However, the data did not support this assumption. One factor, the use of a library, consistently stood out as presenting an academic advantage to students (Slates et al., 2012). This study by Slates et al. (2012) assisted in looking at factors that may contribute to or mitigate summer learning loss and some of the specific factors that could be potentially replicated to address summer learning loss. There is plenty of research that supports the reality of summer learning loss. However, there is little research on how to address the loss. There are clear and specific differences between low SES families and low SES students identified as ESLs.

In May 2010, a report on summer learning was released by the Afterschool Alliance, supported by the Wallace Foundation. This report highlighted the inequity and inequality found in summer opportunities for our students. The report cites evidence

from the past 100 years that deals with summer learning loss (Alliance, 2010). The study found that nearly three-quarters of children in America do not participate in a summer learning program (Alliance, 2010). This is particularly concerning given the rising evidence of summer learning loss. They also found that students who participate in after-school programs during the school year are much more likely to participate in summer learning programs.

The report also found that there is great support for summer learning programs. Eighty-three percent of parents support public funding for summer programs; by subgroup, 95% of African American, 91% of Hispanic, and 90% of low-income parents support using public funds for these programs (Alliance, 2010). There are many great summer programs available but the demand for them still outweighs the availability of programs. The study being examined showed that 56% of nonparticipating parents reported that they would like for their child to participate based on parent interest (Alliance, 2010). If there were more high-quality programs available, the data suggest many more students would enroll in these programs. This could potentially have a huge impact on summer learning loss as the research shows the positive impact reading has on summer learning loss. Table 2 illustrates the supply and demand of high-quality summer programs in South Carolina.

Table 2

State Level Demand and Support for Summer Learning Programs

Question	Percent Responding		Estimated Number of Kids*
	Yes	No	
Does your child participate in a summer learning program?	25	75	Participating 182,333
If not, are you interested in enrolling your child in a summer learning program?	59	41	Whose Parents are Interested in Enrolling Them 320,906
Do you support public funding for summer learning programs?	80	7**	**-Other respondents answered "Don't Know"

Note. In South Carolina, 567 households were surveyed for this study. Among those households, 50% qualified for free or reduced price lunch, 2% were Hispanic and 33% were African-American.
*According to U.S. Department of Education data from 2005-2006, the total school enrollment in South Carolina was 729,331, which is the foundation for all statewide projections in South Carolina.

Summer learning loss has proven to be a problem in the State of South Carolina as well. This is of particular importance because this is where the program being studied took place. The South Carolina Educational Policy Center and the Office of Program Evaluation completed a program evaluation on the South Carolina Reading First Initiative. This was a large-scale program that took place from 2004-2010. Researchers found that students involved in the program demonstrated increases in achievement during the school year while losing achievement during the summer months (Monrad et al., 2011). This aligns with much of the current research as well. Figure 4 shows how much impact summer learning loss had on the participants.

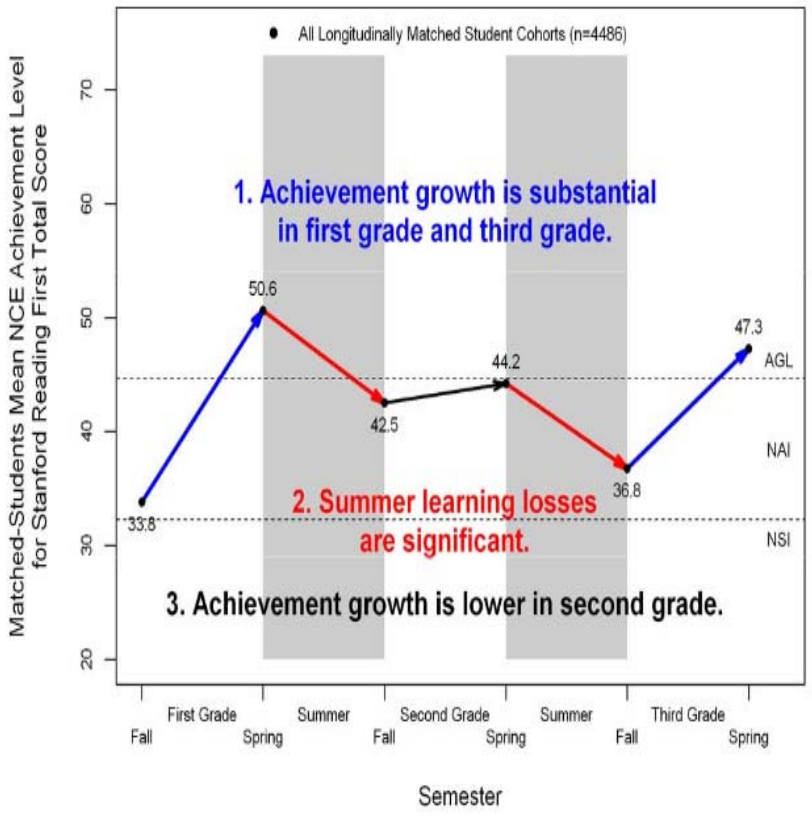

Figure 4. Pattern of Seasonal Learning for Students in the SC Reading First Initiative.

The researchers also found that while most students experienced gains during the school year regardless of subgroup, there were wide ranging differences between subgroups. The researchers concluded that students in South Carolina could achieve at much higher levels if they did not have to combat significant summer learning loss each year (Monrad et al., 2011). Figure 5 shows the differences of gains and losses by subgroup of students.

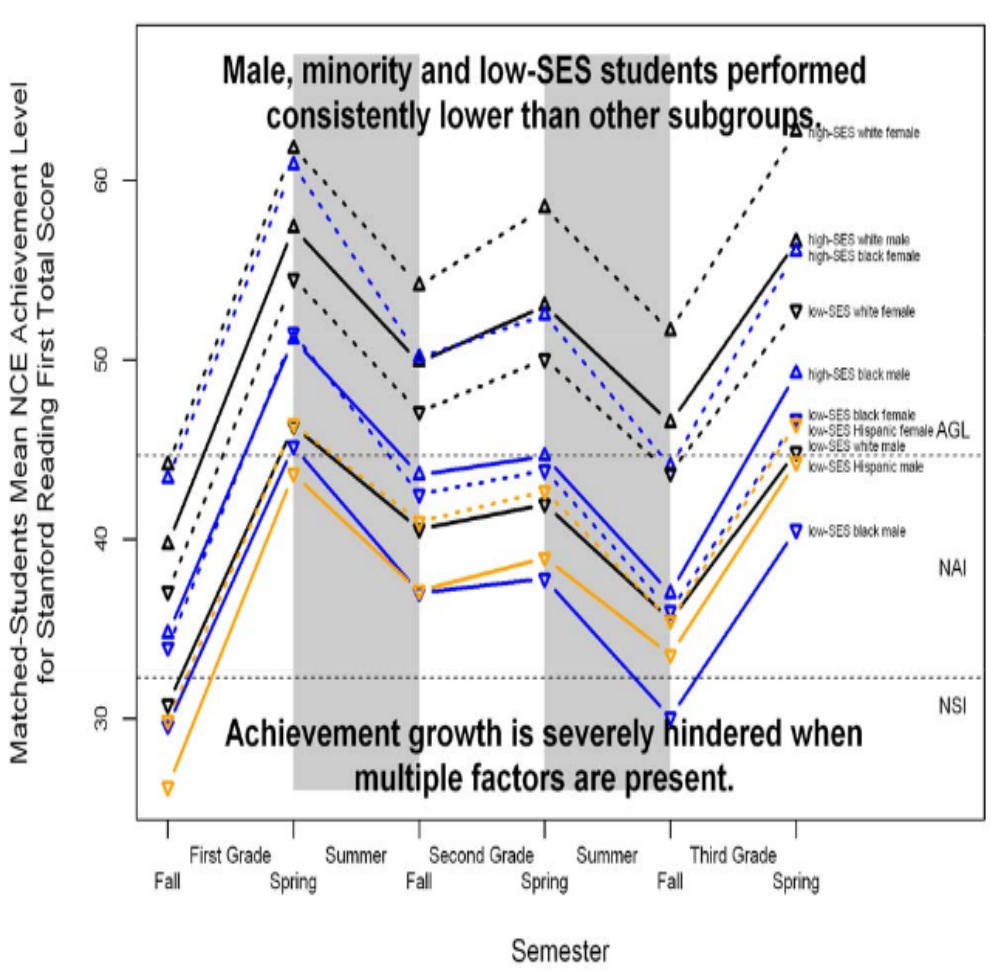

Figure 5. Student Mean NCE Scores by Gender, Ethnicity, and SES.

Richard Allington is a leading researcher in the field of reading and summer learning loss. He conducted a study in which participants were given 12 books each summer for 3 years. He was attempting to determine if providing access to books would help prevent or reduce the summer learning slide. The program followed students for 3 years as most previous studies were only for 1 year. Researchers felt this time span would provide more reliable data.

Students were selected randomly from 17 elementary schools in one district in Florida. These students were either in kindergarten or first grade when the study began.

Their results on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) would be compared to a randomly selected control group. The control group contained 631 students, while the treatment group had 1,082 students. The treatment group was much larger due to anticipated attrition during the program. When students were selected to participate in the program, they were brought to a *book fair* at the end of the school year.

They would choose 12 books from a large list that was predetermined by the researchers. They wanted to guarantee the students had plenty of choices since they felt self-selection was a key component to the study (Allington et al., 2010). There were no other student supports provided during this study. They did not provide academic support or scaffolding of any kind. The intent of the study was to determine if guaranteed access to books prevented or reduced a summer learning slide.

At the end of the study, the researchers had sufficient data on 852 students from the treatment group and 478 students from the control group. The students were administered the Literacy Habits Survey, and the research concluded that these students read more over the summer based on self-reported reading inventories (Allington et al., 2010). They found statistically significant differences in the performances of the treatment and control group on the FCAT (Allington et al., 2010). The researchers stated this study provided evidence that this method works:

> This study provides the best evidence to date that ensuring easy and continuing access to self-selected books for summer reading is one potential strategy for addressing summer reading setback and, therefore, addressing the reading achievement gap that exists between students from more and less economically advantaged families. (Allington et al., 2010, p. 423-424)

The Allington et al. (2010) study only involved providing books to students.

There were no other supports for the students included in the study. There was some question from other researchers in regards to if providing other supports and structures would amplify the positive effect of such a program. In 2007, Kim conducted research somewhat similar to the Allington et al. study. However, this study was on a much smaller scale and a key difference was that more direct support, at least at the start of the program, was provided to students. In this study, students from kindergarten to sixth grade were selected to participate. This involved 231 students in a large, suburban school district. They received 10 books over the summer. They received the books by mail from June to September. The students participating in the program were administered a pre and posttest as well as surveys (Kim).

The assessment was administered to students in June and then again in September. This was to assess the effects of the treatment on achievement (Kim, 2007). The students were also given the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) at the beginning of the program and then a survey at the conclusion of the program. The survey would help determine how many books they read during the summer and how much time was spent on literacy activities over the summer. The researcher thought measuring the time spent in reading activities was important since the length of books vary so widely (Kim, 2007).

Teachers provided motivation and support for the students at the start of the program. Teachers modeled how to respond to questions they might see on reading postcards that would be sent to their house. They encouraged the students and told them they were a part of this program that was designed to motivate kids to read for enjoyment. This type of support is very limited, but more than the Allington et al. (2010) study. The study by Kim (2007) addressed the following three research questions:

1. Did the intervention increase voluntary reading of books and literacy activities during summer vacation?
2. Did the intervention improve reading achievement?
3. Did the intervention increase access to books for low-income children?

The data did show that students from the treatment group read more books than the control group. They read about three more books on average (Kim, 2007). There was not a statistically significant effect on achievement test scores as a result of the treatment. This is an interesting finding as it is in direct opposition to the findings of the large-scale Allington et al. (2010) study. Finally, the study did reduce the number of low-income students who reported owning between zero and 10 books (Kim, 2007).

Kim (2007) also conducted another series of studies that aimed to increase the amount of support and scaffolding to a program that provides guaranteed access to books. The researchers felt strong enough about these support mechanisms to say,

> Our assumption was that, especially for students at risk for summer learning loss, it may be necessary to put in place supportive mechanisms to ensure students read the books and read in ways that are likely to build decoding skills, fluency and comprehension. (White & Kim, 2008, p. 117).

The researchers conducted two experiments. In the first experiment, students received books over the summer as well as some in school scaffolding and support. The researchers then wanted to test their findings on a larger scale and under slightly different circumstances. This second experiment consisted of four groups (White & Kim, 2008):

1. Matched books only
2. Matched books with oral reading
3. Matched books, oral reading, and comprehension strategies instruction

4. Control Group

Reading surveys were completed by students in September. The questions were designed to gauge time spent reading over the summer and how many books the students owned. The students were also administered the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in June and in September. This would test the amount of academic achievement lost or gained over the summer. Oral reading would be tested as part of the experiment as well. In all experiments conducted, there was evidence the intervention had a positive impact on student summer reading activity (White & Kim, 2008).

There was not a significant difference in academic reading achievement between the control group and the group that only received books. However, these students reported reading more than the other students (White & Kim, 2008). As presented in Figures 6, 7, and 8, the more support and scaffolding the students received, the better they performed on the assessment. The second experiment shows greater growth and achievement. When the data are disaggregated further, it becomes clear this was a successful program for students, especially minority students and low-income students. Low-income students gained an average of 4 months (White & Kim, 2008). "Notably, this is enough to offset 100% of the summer learning loss shown by low-income students in Cooper et al.'s (1996) meta-analysis of studies of the effect of summer vacation on achievement, 0.34 grade-level equivalents of about 3 months" (White & Kim, 2008, p.123).

This study has implications on the design of summer reading programs that provide guaranteed access to books. While it conflicts with the findings of the large-scale Allington et al. (2010) study, it does show the positive effects of these types of summer reading programs. While the Allington et al. study showed positive academic

achievement effects based solely on the distribution of books, this study demonstrated a program needs to provide much more support in order to increase academic achievement among students participating. Based on the data analysis from this study, one would conclude that the more support that is provided with the books, the better the students will perform (White & Kim, 2008).

	N (total for both groups)	Standard deviation (combining groups)	Treatment group mean (ITBS total reading)[a]	Control group mean (ITBS total reading)[a]	Additional months of learning[b]
All students (including "other" ethnicity)	486	24.1	207.9	205.9	+1.3
White	160	24.3	221.8	219.2	+1.6
Black	93	19.6	201.5	196.3	+3.3
Hispanic	125	18.6	197.2	193.9	+2.1
Asian	85	22.0	203.1	207.2	–2.6
Low-income	183	20.3	199.8	198.5	+0.8

[a]adjusted for pretest scores. [b]See text for explanation.

Figure 6. Results from the First Experiment.

	N (total for both groups)	Standard deviation (combining groups)	Treatment group mean (ITBS total reading)[a, b]	Control group mean (ITBS total reading)[b]	Additional months of learning[c]
All students (including "other" ethnicity)	207	28.3	207.0	203.1	+2.5
White	72	25.4	221.6	222.4	–0.5
Black	50	26.2	201.0	198.4	+1.7
Hispanic	61	24.3	196.0	188.1	+5.1
Low-income	77	22.6	195.6	189.3	+4.0

[a]Books With Oral Reading and Comprehension Scaffolding only; other treatment groups, Books Only and Books With Oral Reading Scaffolding are excluded to make Tables 1 and 2 comparable. [b]Adjusted for pretest scores. [c]See text for explanation.

Figure 7. Results of the Second Experiment.

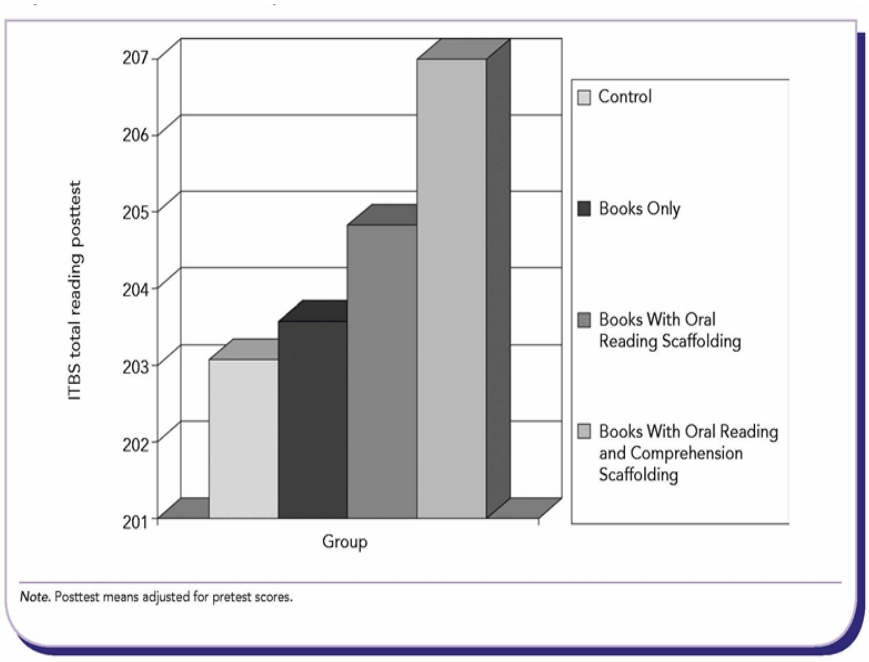

Figure 8. Graphed Results of the Second Experiment.

As part of the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, Jimmy Kim, in 2004, conducted a study on this topic. The research was to address two questions: (1) would reading books during the summer improve reading proficiency scores in the fall and (2) would access to books increase the volume of reading (Kim, 2004)? Students in the study were administered the ERAS to gauge their attitude towards reading. Assessment scores were also used to determine proficiency loses or gains. The research found that there were positive relationships between both. Students who read over the summer posted higher assessment scores, and students who were given access to books read more over the summer. It was found that reading four to five books may eliminate summer learning loss (Kim, 2004). This research clearly indicated a need for an increase in book ownership since having access to books allowed kids to read more over the summer.

McTague and Abrams (2011) developed a program to test whether providing access to books would reduce summer learning loss. In addition to providing access to

books, they also developed a program the students had to participate in while receiving the books. It consisted of a 5-week program that met 4 days per week for 3 hours per day. In this multi-week program, students received reading comprehension instruction by tutors (McTague & Abrams, 2011). A library was used as the center point of the program. It was set up in a neat and attractive manner. They wanted to make it an appealing place that drew the students' attention to books. This is where the tutoring took place, and students were able to take books home after each session.

The program also consisted of support in selecting books. Rather than allowing the students complete free choice as discussed in other studies, this program wanted to assist children in finding *just right* books. They used the following factors to assist in the selection of books: book statistics, such as author, title and genre; inter-textuality; using trade books for instruction; and choosing trade books for instruction.

The program also consisted of providing social experiences and interactions with books. They wanted students to feel connected to their books and be able to discuss them with other students and the tutors (McTague & Abrams, 2011). As adults, we often crave these same social experiences and join book clubs. The researchers were trying to duplicate that atmosphere. The program combined more formal reading instruction with these experiences to give their students a wide range of activities with books. The program culminated with a trip to the bookstore for the students so they could purchase more books.

The researchers wanted to measure the attitudes and habits of the participants in the program. This was measured by the ERAS. It was administered at the beginning and end of the program. It was then administered once again several months later to gauge the long-term effectiveness of the program. The data are limited in size due to student

mobility and included 12 students. Their data did show an increase in positive attitudes toward reading and, more significantly, the effect lasted long after the program ended (McTague & Abrams, 2011). This program is different from the Allington et al. (2010) study as it offers more support in the program. Students not only received books but they had to participate in the program which included much more than receiving books. While this study was small in scope, it offered a different approach to solving the same summer learning loss problem.

Lawrence (2009) found that independent reading in the summer alone is not enough. This study measured vocabulary knowledge and word learning over the summer. The researcher in the study discussed that there was research that suggested reading quantity may lead students to learn more words (Lawrence). This study attempted to classify the types of reading students engage in over the summer. This would be used to determine how it impacts fall vocabulary scores (Lawrence). He did not find this reading impacted fall vocabulary performance. One of the reasons the researcher attributed this fact was the wide range of reading material permitted in the study. There was not a real way to manage or measure the quality of reading done by the students as they participated in the study.

As part of the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, Kim (2004) reported on a study conducted to determine whether summer reading influenced academic achievement results in the fall and whether access to books increased the amount of summer reading. These questions have been addressed in other studies as well. The subjects were given the ERAS to gauge their attitudes on summer reading. The researcher found that the amount of summer reading is positively related to an increase in fall academic reading scores (Kim). The motivation to read is a major dynamic in

summer reading and summer learning. Since students are not attending classes each day, the decision to read or not lies with them.

Reading becomes more difficult as a student progresses through school. Middle school is often a challenging time in many ways for students and reading is not an exception. Motivation to read declines significantly in middle school (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). Students are expected to read much more difficult texts and this might be a cause of the decline in reading achievement and engagement with text (Kelley & Decker, 2009). This is a critical time to address this issue. In *PISA 2009: What Students Know and Can Do: Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science* (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010), it was found that students who reported enjoying reading the most were the highest performing students in reading.

The researchers also noted that self-efficacy as a reader is particularly important. Students need to see themselves as readers and in a positive light. This will impact their time spent reading and their reading achievement. Pitcher et al. (2007) noted that if students feel reading is too difficult or not fulfilling, they can quickly become nonreaders. Kelley and Decker (2009) wanted to investigate how one can determine another's motivation to read.

The students in the study were given the Motivation to Read Profile survey. The results were then analyzed. The analysis showed a statistically significant difference between male and female motivation to read. There was also a statistically significant difference based on grade level (Kelley & Decker, 2009). Students in the sixth grade were most motivated and then it declined from there. It was also found that as the students got older, they placed less value on reading. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate the

findings from this study.

Item Response Options	% of Sixth Graders	% of Seventh Graders	% of Eighth Graders
Never	7	7	11
Almost never	10	12	18
Sometimes	50	48	43
Often	33	32	27

Note. $N = 1080$.

Figure 9. Percentage of Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Graders Who Read Outside of School.

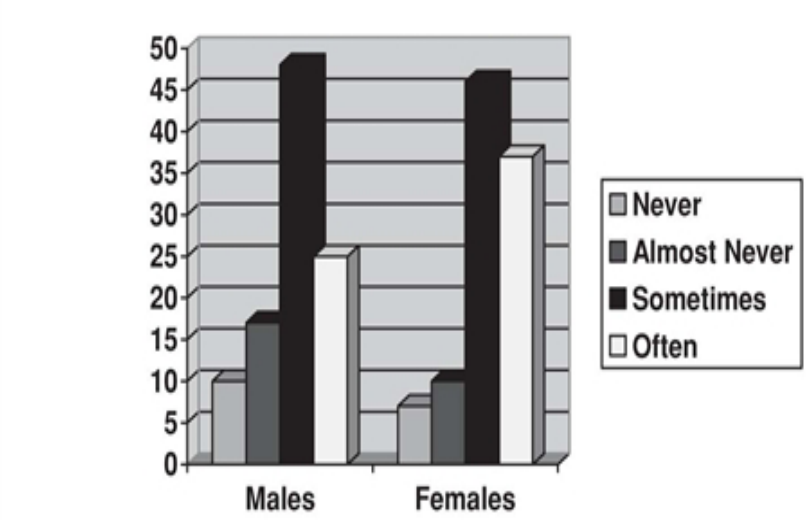

Figure 10. Percentage of Males and Females Who Read Outside of School.

The study shows the importance of addressing motivation to read. Why do our students, especially males, lose interest in reading as they progress through school? What can schools do to increase reading motivation? In a meta-analysis on reading and motivation, Guthrie and Humenick (2004) found that choice in reading had the second largest effect size on reading motivation. Students need to have a sense of control over

what they read, and this impacts motivation. Educators see this in schools every day. Choice in reading is paramount in motivation. According to Moley, Bandre, and George (2011), teachers must work to understand how book selection and reading selection impact motivation. This is critical in motivating students to want to read. This leads to intrinsic motivation and is shown to be more effective than extrinsic motivation when it comes to reading. In fact, Unrau and Schlackman (2006) found that extrinsic motivation was related to poorer reading skills.

Many students encounter new types of reading when entering middle school and it is often more complex (Brinda, 2011). There are other factors as well that begin to impact their reading lives and prevent them from enjoying books while in middle school (Brinda, 2011). Reluctant readers are people who are able to read but choose not to for some reason. A similar term, *aliteracy,* has a very similar meaning. These are students who can read but who choose not to read (Thimmesch, 1984). Many students fall into this category and have become disengaged with reading. In Brinda's (2011) study, students who were reluctant readers identified fourth, fifth, and sixth grades as when they lost interest in reading. In an effort to further explore this area of reading motivation, Brinda selected two schools to compare, and each read *A Wrinkle in Time.* Brinda would then meet with teachers and students from both schools to try to uncover how students morph into reluctant readers. The ladder literacy graphic was chosen by the students. The different levels of the ladder are below.

Literacy
Read
Discuss
Connect
Discover
Motivate
Enjoy
Comprehend
Encourage
Introduce
Aliteracy

The idea of the graphic is that students start out at the bottom as alliterate readers. They then work their way up the ladder with support. The most important aspect of the *introduce* step is that teachers create interest in the reading selection. This is different from simply assigning a reading selection; it is actively creating interest among the students (Brinda, 2011). The *encourage* step is when teachers help students make connections with the book. This allows students to build on their interest and make personal connections with the books (Brinda, 2011). Through the *comprehend* rung, the teachers and researchers realized the importance of giving students plenty of time and practice with the book. This led to increased test scores (Brinda, 2011). The next step, *enjoy*, is critical for a variety of reasons. This is when teachers help students find enjoyment in the book. It is also when connections are solidified and the reader is motivated to keep reading.

As the steps of the ladder build on one another, comprehension opens the door for this enjoyment. This motivates the readers to keep reading (Brinda, 2011). The next step on the ladder is *motivate*. The previous steps have built on one another up to this level. Brinda (2011) found that this was a great time to encourage student reflection. The next three steps are *discover, connect*, and *discuss*. Once students reached these steps, they progressed through them quickly. The last step is *read* and it is the culminating level on

the ladder. This is when students reported confidence and pride in finishing the book (Brinda). The *ladder to literacy* provided a framework on how to possibly work with students who are disengaged with reading. It showed a method to increase student motivation to read and enjoy success with reading (Brinda).

Becker, McElvany, and Kortenbruck (2010) were interested in determining "how reading amount and reading literacy are associated, first, with intrinsic reading motivation and, second, with extrinsic reading motivation" (p. 775). They found that the more students were intrinsically motivated, the more they would read. "In other words, children who see reading as a desirable activity tend to read more frequently and thus develop better reading skills" (Becker et al., p. 781). They also found that extrinsic motivation was negatively associated with the amount of reading as well as reading achievement. Students are motivated to continue to do things they have found success with in the past (Becker et al.). The study showed that the amount of reading a student does can strongly be determined by the degree of intrinsic motivation. (Becker et al.). Intrinsic motivation has been found as having a positive relationship with reading comprehension in numerous studies (Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie, 2009). Motivation can also be situational.

What motivates a person in one situation may not necessarily move from place to place. Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, and Perencevich (2006) found that situational motivation occurs in classrooms. They found when classroom supports are in place, motivation is likely to increase. We have found evidence of this in the different summer reading programs. This study found that more supports lead to greater motivation (Guthrie et al., 2006). The literature also shows that student choice in reading is a leading factor in motivation, especially among middle school aged students (Fisher &

Frey, 2012).

Gambrell (2011) found that providing a wealth of reading material shows that it is a valued activity. When students see adults place an importance on reading, they may see it as important as well. Students are also more likely to be engaged in reading when they have the opportunity to read. Teachers should also promote and raise student interest in available books. These factors contribute to student motivation to read (Gambrell). It was also found that student ownership of books increased motivation to read.

Kelley Gallagher is an expert on reading motivation. Gallagher (2010) asserted that schools are part of the problem when it comes to declining motivation to read among students. He suggested that schools do not provide authentic reading experiences for students. He also suggested that schools often over teach books. This includes giving worksheets, having students stop after *X* number of lines or pages and complete an activity, and so on. This distracts the reader and makes them not want to read (Gallager 2010). He also said there is a danger in under teaching books. Students need some assistance in framing a book and require some support along the way. Gallagher said that teachers need to balance this and provide just the right amount of assistance. If too much or too little teaching occurs, students will not read what they are supposed to read. Gallagher also advocates for recreational reading as a way to increase student reading motivation:

> Our intense focus on testing has brought an intense focus on academic reading, so that students have little exposure to reading for enjoyment in school. Many teachers have pushed aside recreational reading, which may be one reason that so few youth read for enjoyment on their own. (p. 40)

Donohue and Miller (2008) concluded that with all of the research pointing to the

summer learning slide, we need to act now. Students from the northeastern United States, often seen as a more intellectual area, even face summer learning loss. Even though students are learning at the same rate during the school year, lower SES students lose ground over the summer. The author points out that colleges and universities should be working towards supporting schools now that we have this clear research (Donohue & Miller). Smith (2011) also discussed the cost of the summer learning slide. It is estimated that reteaching lost content costs schools about $1,500 per year. This is a substantial cost over the course of a child's educational career (Smith).

Greater attention is being placed on the impact of summer learning loss. While there is a growing research base on the topic, there is not much research on specific strategies to reduce or eliminate summer learning loss. Based on the reviewed literature, most, if not all, experts agree that summer learning loss is a problem. There have been several recent studies on specific strategies; however, the results have not set clear parameters on what works and what does not work at this point.

We have seen that some studies provide conflicting results. This was similar to the findings in the Allington et al. (2010) study and the Kim (2007) research. This has been the case in other studies as well. There have also been studies with varying levels of support provided to students in addition to providing books. The general trend is that the more supports provided, the greater the academic achievement. However, this is not absolute and the large-scale research study by Allington et al. (2010) backs up this point.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Students often lose academic ground over the course of the summer break from school. The effect is multiplied over time, and it widens the achievement gap among students as students from low socioeconomic families experience a larger loss of learning over the summer (Heyns, 1978). The faculty at a public middle school in a southeastern state conducted a summer program to determine if guaranteed access to books would reduce or eliminate summer learning loss in reading and/or increase reading motivation among the participants.

In the first year of the program, teachers identified sixth-grade students who were considered struggling and reluctant readers. These students were administered a reading inventory that provided data on several conditions of reading. Students were asked questions such as if they enjoy reading, do they consider reading fun, how do they feel when they read, how many books are in their home, and other similar questions which allowed the coordinators to gauge the students' attitudes about reading. These same students would be part of year 2 of the program as well. The program coordinators then gathered standardized testing data on the 30 students. The faculty administered the MAP test in the spring and fall. In order to gauge summer learning loss, the spring scores were compared to the fall scores. Test scores were analyzed over 2 years. In order to gauge motivation and student perception of reading value, the program compared the reading inventories taken by students in the fall and spring of each year of the program.

Each student in the program received 12 books at the end of the school year. Two of the books were selected from the school's summer reading list and the other 10 books were chosen by the student based on interest. It was important to the study that students had their choice of books**.** There is prior research on the importance of self-selection of

reading material by the students. This research confirms that students are more motivated to read when they have a choice in the material (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). The program coordinators assisted the students in selecting books based on the students' interests. This was done in an effort to match students with books on their reading level or slightly above their reading level. This helped ensure students were able to comprehend the books they read. These are commonly known as *just right* books. The students would own the 12 books they chose: It was hoped this new library would assist in developing the sense of being a reader by the student.

The school faculty held four summer reading events, and the students were invited to attend. However, it is important to note that the participating students were not required to attend these parties although their attendance would most likely help keep them focused on reading over the summer. There were no mandatory assignments for the students to complete on what they read. This would have the potential to disengage the students from reading. The project was focused on developing a positive attitude towards reading so the summer reading events consisted of word games and other reading related activities. Students created book posters and wordles based on their selected books at these parties. However, it is important to mention again that attendance at these summer reading parties was not mandatory. The parties were presented only as an option.

When the students returned to school in the fall, they were given the same reading inventory. This allowed the coordinators to analyze the responses to see if there were changes in the perception of reading. The MAP scores were also analyzed to determine if the traditional summer learning loss was minimized or eliminated. Students remaining in the school the second year received 12 additional books. They were also administered the reading inventory once again. Additionally, their MAP scores were compared once

again. This would give the students 2 years to benefit from the program. The students' scores on both the reading inventory and MAP were compared to the same number of randomly selected students. This provided a comparison of students who participated in the program to students who did not participate in the program. This group is considered the control group. This program evaluation assessed the impact the school program had on summer learning loss and motivation.

Participants

Participants were chosen by teacher recommendation, with a focus on students living in poverty. Teachers had insight and knowledge about each student. The study focused on students identified as struggling or reluctant readers. This was to eliminate the chance of selecting students who participated in the free and reduced lunch program and were already strong and avid readers. If students who are strong and avid readers were selected for the program, it would skew the results as those students would most likely not experience any summer learning loss.

Since summer learning loss in reading primarily occurs in students living in poverty, the reading program mostly focused on students from this group. Of the students in the program, 83% qualified for the free/reduced lunch program.

The school faculty chose 30 sixth-grade students in year 1 of the program. This was the earliest grade level in the school and this provided access to these students and their data for 3 years. The students who remained in the school for their seventh-grade year participated in year 2 of the program. The school had three teams in the sixth grade, and each English language arts teacher provided recommendations for 10 students. The total number of program participants was 30.

Instruments

Two instruments were used in the study. The first was the South Carolina version of the MAP assessment. This assessment is used nationally. This assessment was used to determine learning loss or gain over the summer months. It was administered in the spring at the end of the school year and then again in the fall at the beginning of the next school year. This cycle was repeated for year 2. The 2-year span of the program provided a wider breadth of data. MAP assessment results are reported in a variety of ways, including Rausch Interval Unit scores, referred to as RIT scores. RIT scores are on an interval scale which means each interval of scores indicates the same difficulty. In other words, the growth from 195 to 197 indicates the same change in difficulty as growth from 199 to 201. Student data were analyzed for the summer prior to the study and both years of the program. This allowed for a comparison of the 2 years before the program and the 2 years in the program. The rate of growth or loss of the summer prior to program participation allowed the researchers to determine the impact of the program in years 3 and 4 of the data. The Northwest Evaluation Agency, which created and administers the MAP, provided the expected growth for each student in each grade level. This expected growth was compared to the actual growth of the student.

Many researchers and practitioners are familiar with the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey. This survey was adapted from the Motivation to Read Survey (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) with permission by researchers working with adolescents (Pitcher et al., 2007). Permission to use this instrument for this program evaluation can be found in Appendix A. The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey can be found in Appendix B. The questions were modified to better relate to adolescents as the survey was originally designed for younger children.

The revised survey asks students 20 questions, 10 questions relating to assessing self-concept as a reader and 10 questions relating to their attitude toward the value of reading. This reading survey was used to compare student perceptions at the beginning of the program and then again at the end of the program.

The survey was administered at the end of the first school year and then again at the start of the next school year after receiving the books. This was repeated for the second year of the program. Overall, each participant completed the survey three times. An analysis was completed on each individual item. This allowed for a better understanding and clearer picture of progress over time.

Procedures

The first step in the study was determining the participants. As explained earlier, this was done by teacher recommendation. Once students were selected, they were administered a reading survey that gauged their attitudes toward reading and their areas of interest. The reading survey used was the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile. Once these data were compiled, each student was given two books from the school's summer reading list that matched their interests. These books were distributed to the students in a meeting in a room next to the room where the remaining books were located. Once these books were distributed, the students were brought to the adjoining room.

In this room, the remaining books were organized in a visually appealing way by genre and area of interest. The students were given the opportunity to select 10 other books based on their areas of interest. Once the students selected the books, they were brought to the checkout area where the books were scanned so a record could be kept as well as to provide a *real life* experience of going to a bookstore. The school faculty felt it

was appropriate to create a fun and exciting atmosphere during the book distribution. They wanted the students to feel special since they were selected for this new program. Many of these students had never been able to purchase books at a bookstore before participating in this program.

All students in the school participate in MAP testing each fall and spring so the testing was not an additional burden on the students. The selected students reconvened at the start of the school year and discussed their summer reading experiences. This was done in an effort to informally gauge if the students had read the books and to encourage discussion among them about reading. There were no formal questions to respond to or prompts to answer. The same reading survey was then administered. The results for each student were compared to their survey results from the previous fall. This provided data on the changes in the student's perceptions of reading. The same process was followed for the second year of participation in the program. This provided 2 years of data on reading motivation and concept.

The students completed the fall MAP with all of the students in the school. The results of the MAP data were then analyzed. Specifically, their end-of-year (spring) score was compared to the next year's fall score. These data provided evidence of learning loss or gain. This was then compared to a control group of similar students to determine if there was any difference in the learning loss between the two groups of students, thus providing evidence of any possible effect of guaranteed access to books on summer learning loss. The same cycle was completed for year 2 of the program. This provided researchers with 2 years of assessment data rather than 1 year. The time frame allowed for a clearer picture of the students' attitudes and perceptions of reading and how they viewed themselves as readers. It permitted analysis from year to year as well as

over a 2-year time span. A matched-pair t test was used in the evaluation. The matched-pair t tests were conducted for the students' fifth- to sixth-grade summer, which was before they entered the program. The same test was then applied to the sixth- to seventh-grade summer and seventh- to eighth-grade summer. This allowed for an analysis of the students' summer gain/loss before entering the program, while in the program, and at the end of the program.

A matched-pair t test was also utilized to analyze the results from the reading surveys. The students completed the reading survey three times. They completed the survey upon entry to the program before they received any books. The students then completed the same survey in the fall after their first summer of participating in the program. The students completed the survey once again after their second summer of participation in the program. The matched-pair t test was used to determine the amount of growth or loss in the three main areas of the survey. A survey score was given based on the entire survey. Additionally, scores were given based on two subsections of the survey. These included student self-concept as a reader (motivation) and student value of reading. These results helped measure a change in motivation to read and the value students placed on the importance of reading.

A control group was created to be used during the data analysis. The control group was selected based on several demographic categories. A demographic match was ensured through the process. Their scores on the reading portion of MAP were also part of the matching process. Students had to be within 10 points of the sample group in order to be selected for the control group. This ensured an approximate match on starting test scores. A matched-pair t test was used since it can present the data in pairs and can determine if there is a difference in the two pairs.

Data Collection Procedures

Students participating in the program took the MAP computerized adaptive assessment twice a year like all students in the studied school. Students were administered the assessment in the fall and spring. Students were also given the *Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile* three times. They completed the survey at the beginning of the program before receiving any books. They completed the same survey after the first summer of participating in the program. Finally, they completed the survey again after the second summer of participating in the program. This instrument is widely used to gauge student motivation in reading as well as to gauge their perceived value of reading. The survey provides three different results. The first is an overall score on all 20 questions. It is then aggregated into two subcategories. One of the subcategories contains questions that focus specifically on student reading motivation. The other subcategory contains questions that specifically measure perceived value of reading. All of the questions are combined on the survey so students do not necessarily know which section they are working on and how it is potentially viewed by the researchers.

Data Analysis Procedures

The MAP assessment is offered at the school in reading and math. For this study, the investigator considered the overall RIT score on the reading section of MAP. Specifically, the student's end-of-year (spring) score was compared to the next year's fall score. These data provided evidence of learning loss or gain. This was then compared to another group of similar students to determine if there was any difference in the learning loss between the two groups of students, thus providing evidence of any possible effect of guaranteed access to books on summer learning loss. The control group was a very similar group of students who did not participate in the program.

The control group was selected based on several demographic categories. The students' RIT scores on the reading portion of MAP were also part of the matching process. Students had to be within 10 points of the sample group in order to be selected for the control group. The same cycle was administered for year 2 of the program. This provided the researcher with 2 years of assessment data rather than 1 year. The time frame also allowed for a clearer picture of the students' attitudes and perceptions of reading and how they viewed themselves as readers. It allowed analysis from year to year as well as over a 2-year time span. A matched-pair t test was used in the evaluation. The matched-pair t tests were conducted on the data from the students' fifth- to sixth-grade summer, which was before they entered the summer reading program. This helped determine if there were differences in summer learning loss or gain before the groups entered the program.

The same test was then applied to the sixth- to seventh-grade summer and seventh- to eighth-grade summer. This allowed for an analysis of their summer gain/loss before entering the program, while in the program, and at the end of the program. These data were then compared to similar data from the control group. The control group was created based on similarities with the sample group. The most important part of this process was matching entering MAP reading scores. Students from the control group had to match the sample group demographically and also fall within a 10-point range on MAP scores in reading. This ensured a much more evenly matched control group.

Anticipated Outcomes

It was anticipated that the program would reduce or eliminate summer learning loss for the participants. The existing research indicated that students who do not have access to books over the summer suffer large losses in reading achievement (Allington et

al., 2010). Providing books should reduce this loss as the students will be more likely to read over the summer.

It was also expected that the views students hold of themselves as readers would improve due to the program. If children do not have access to books, it seems there is little chance they will enjoy reading or see themselves as strong readers. As they build their own home library, it is reasonable to expect they will see themselves as readers.

This study, while small in nature, can have an impact on how schools treat summer vacation. Many school districts spend large sums of money on summer school. If this study proves providing guaranteed access to books prevents summer learning loss, it will give schools and districts a cheaper alternative to summer school. If the program proves to be effective, it will allow schools to pursue this to improve the academic performance of their students over time by reducing the ever-present summer learning loss.

Limitations

There were several limitations that must be discussed. There were only 30 students who participated in the program. With this number of participants, it was difficult to make generalizations based on this program evaluation alone. This is a small number in scope, but it does provide research on a whether a specific program has accomplished the goal of reducing or eliminating summer learning loss and building student motivation to read.

Another limitation was the reliability of student test scores. Through direct experience in the field and anecdotal evidence, students, especially during middle school ages, often do not try their best on assessments they may see as meaningless. This attitude towards testing could impact the results of the assessments and thus this study.

This was confronted in our MAP score analysis. A review of the time spent on each test question clearly demonstrated that not all students took an appropriate amount of time to answer each question. This certainly impacted their MAP score.

The scheduling of the testing does not completely isolate summer learning. Students do not take the MAP on the last day of school and then on the first day of school. Thus, some in-school learning could affect the summer learning loss or gain. This would tend to lessen the achievement gap since some of the time period between testing dates is spent in school. Finally, the students in the control group did not take the survey. Thus, a comparison could not be made between the two groups on the survey.

Chapter 4: Results

Students often lose academic ground over the course of the summer break from school. The effect is multiplied over time and it widens the achievement gap among students as students from low socioeconomic families experience a larger loss of learning over the summer (Heyns, 1978). While the research on summer learning loss is clear and established, there is not a wealth of research on what can be done to mitigate this loss (Alexander et al., 2007a). Schools across the nation are grappling with the reality of improving the test scores of all students and ensuring they reach certain benchmarks set by the No Child Left Behind legislation. It is now increasingly tougher to meet these standards as they often change due to states being eligible to apply for waivers that exempt them from certain requirements of the original No Child Left Behind legislation.

This study evaluated a voluntary summer reading program that aimed to reduce or eliminate summer learning loss in reading as measured by the reading portion of the South Carolina version of the MAP assessment. The study also evaluated if student participation in the program increased reading motivation and student perception of reading value as measured by the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile survey. The survey has two portions, one that measures self-concept as a reader and another that measures the perception of the value of reading.

It is important to note that there are other theories of what causes summer learning loss. Many of these theories focus on lack of opportunities for learning in the summer for children living in poverty. This includes lack of opportunities such as going to museums, visiting historical sites, and similar activities. However, the school faculty decided that access to books was something they could control so they decided to focus on this theory of why learning loss may occur in the summer.

In an effort to close this economic summer achievement gap, the faculty decided to create a program to keep students engaged in reading over the summer. In a 2004 study, researchers found that students who read four or five books over the summer could prevent summer learning loss (Allington et al., 2010). The school also hoped giving students books for the creation of or addition to their home library would increase their motivation to read. The research questions of this study were to determine the following:

1. To what extent is guaranteed access to books associated with reducing summer learning loss in reading, as measured by MAP?

2. To what extent did participation in this program increase reading motivation and student perception of the value of reading, as measured by the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile?

The independent variable in the first research question was providing access to books. Conceptually, the idea was to ensure that students have access to books. This would eliminate the issue of students not having access to books at home. Operationally, students were chosen based on teacher recommendation on the basis of being identified as reluctant readers. A focus was placed on students living in poverty. Eighty-three percent of the program participants qualified for the free/reduced lunch program at the school. This measure is often used in schools to determine whether or not a child is living in poverty.

The dependent variable was the student's test score on the MAP. Conceptually, the idea was to determine the amount of summer learning loss experienced by the students who were given books the previous spring. Operationally, the spring (end of school year) reading score was compared to the student's score on the following school year's fall (beginning of school year) reading score. This measurement of progress

occurred in each year of the 2-year program. The RIT scores on the reading portion of MAP of the sample group were then compared to the control group. This helped determine if there was a difference in the summer learning loss or growth between the two groups.

The independent variable for the second research question was the same as in the first question. The dependent variable for the second question was the student's score on the reading survey that determined their attitude towards reading. Conceptually, the idea was to determine if providing the books would develop a stronger sense of being a confident reader in the student. Operationally, the student's score on the reading survey administered in the spring was compared to the student's score on the same reading survey administered in the spring of the following school year.

Qualitative Results

A matched-pair t test was also used to analyze the results from the reading surveys. The students completed the survey three times. They completed the survey upon entry to the program before they received any books. The students then completed the same survey in the fall after their first summer of participating in the program. They then completed the survey once again after their second summer of participation in the program. The matched-pair t test was used to determine the amount of growth or loss in the three main areas of the survey. A score was given based on the entire survey. Additionally, scores were given based on two subsections of the survey. These included student self-concept as a reader (motivation) and student value of reading. These results helped measure a change.

Descriptive Demographics

The table below shows the demographic analysis of the students who were

involved in the program. A control group was randomly selected by computer that mirrors the sample group in a variety of ways. The characteristics found in the chart below were used to create the conditions of the control group. This included gender, ethnicity, lunch status, and instructional setting. Additionally, the beginning MAP RIT reading score was also used as a factor in determining the control group. Students must have been within 10 points to be considered for the control group. Using this factor strengthens the similarities of the control group and sample group and helps prevent the disproportionate effect a heavy outlier might have on the data. They were very similar based on demographics and previous academic performance over the summer months.

Table 3

Sample Group Demographics

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Gender				
F	14	46.67	14	46.67
M	16	53.33	30	100
Ethnicity				
B	15	50	15	50
H	3	10	18	60
W	12	40	30	100
Lunch status				
F	22	73.33	22	73.33
P	5	16.67	27	90
R	3	10	30	100
SC InstrSetting				
50	1	25	1	25
SE	3	75	4	100

Table 4

Control Group Demographics

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Gender				
F	19	50	19	50
M	19	50	38	100
Ethnicity				
B	19	50	19	50
H	2	5.26	21	55.26
W	17	44.74	38	100
Lunch status				
F	28	73.68	28	73.68
P	7	18.42	35	92.11
R	3	7.89	38	100
SC InstrSetting				
50	2	33.33	2	33.33
SE	4	66.67	6	100

The first research question was to determine to what extent guaranteed access to books reduced summer learning loss in reading as measured by MAP. The scores of the students in the sample and control group were analyzed the year before entering the program. This allowed for a better picture of how the groups performed before entering the program and as they progressed through the program. A matched-pair t test was used since a comparison of the performance of the two groups was being analyzed.

The investigator first looked at the student test scores before they entered the program. This provided baseline entry data. The first analysis demonstrated the amount of summer learning loss or gain in reading from the fifth- to sixth-grade school year. This was the year before the students entered the program.

Table 5

MAP RIT Scores from Fifth to Sixth Grade, Before Entering the Program

Status	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Min	Max
C	25	0.2	7.7996	1.5599	-16	16
S	20	-0.3	9.415	2.1053	-21	19
Diff (1-2)		0.5	8.5511	2.5653		

Status	Method	Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
C		0.2	-3.0195	3.4195	7.7996	6.09	10.8504
S		-0.3	-4.7064	4.1064	9.415	7.16	13.7513
Diff (1-2)	Pooled	0.5	-4.6735	5.6735	8.5511	7.065	10.8344
Diff (1-2)	Satterthwaite	0.5	-4.81	5.81			

Method	Variances	DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
Pooled	Equal	43	0.19	0.8464
Satterthwaite	Unequal	36.807	0.19	0.8497

Equality of Variances

Method	Num DF	Den DF	F Value	Pr > F
Folded F	19	24	1.46	0.3802

Table 5 includes the data from the analysis of summer learning loss/gain from the students' fifth- to sixth-grade school year. This was before they entered the summer reading program at the school. Twenty-five students were included in the control group and 20 students were in the sample group. It was found that there was no significant difference in the average summer learning loss/gain as measured by the RIT score on the reading section of MAP between the two groups. The t value was 0.19 and $P > .05$. The control group's mean RIT score increased 0.2 points while the sample group lost a mean of .3 points. There was a .5 point difference between the control and sample group. The standard deviation for the control group was 7.7996 and the standard error for the control group was 1.5599. The standard deviation for the sample group was 9.415 and the standard error was 2.1053. It is important to note the minimum and maximum differences in the analysis. These scores showed a large variation in loss and gain among participants in both groups. The control group had a minimum loss of 16 points and a maximum gain of 16 points. The sample group had a minimum loss of 19 points and a maximum gain of 21 points.

The investigator repeated the exact data analysis for the students' sixth- to seventh-grade school year. This assisted in determining summer learning gain/loss after the first year of participating in the program. The results of the sample group and control group were analyzed to assist in determining if participation in the program for 1 year had a possible impact on summer learning loss in reading as assessed by RIT scores on the MAP assessment. Table 6 displays the analysis of RIT scores on the reading section of the MAP assessment.

Table 6

Sixth- to Seventh-Grade Reading Loss/Gain

Status	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Min	Max
C	28	0.8929	10.0345	1.8963	-29	30
S	24	-5.75	13.1323	2.6806	-37	25
Diff (1-2)		6.6429	11.563	3.2165		

Status	Method	Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
C		0.8929	-2.9981	4.7838	10.035	7.934	13.6584
S		-5.75	-11.2953	-0.2047	13.132	10.21	18.4214
Diff (1-2)	Pooled	6.6429	0.1823	13.1035	11.563	9.675	14.3737
Diff (1-2)	Satterthwaite	6.6429	0.0195	13.2663			

Method	Variances	DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
Pooled	Equal	50	2.07	0.0441
Satterthwaite	Unequal	42.676	2.02	0.0494

Equality of Variances

Method	Num DF	Den DF	F Value	Pr > F
Folded F	23	27	1.71	0.1803

The data showed a significant difference in the two groups. The control group showed a mean gain of .8929 points on their reading RIT score from the spring to the fall. The sample group showed a 5.75 point mean loss in MAP RIT. There was a 6.6429 point difference in scores between the control and sample group. The t value was 2.07 and P > .05. The standard deviation for the control group was 10.0345 and the standard error was 1.8963. The standard deviation of the sample group was 13.1323 and the standard error was 2.6806. It is important to note once again the minimum and maximum gains/losses in both groups. The largest drop in score by one student in the control group was 29 points and the largest increase by one student was 30 points. The largest drop in score for

one student in the sample group was 37 points and the largest gain by one student was 25 points. The analysis was repeated once again to determine loss/gain from the students' seventh- to eighth-grade school year. This was after participating in the program for 2 years. Table 7 displays the analysis of the data from the students' seventh- to eighth-grade school year.

Table 7

Seventh- to Eighth-Grade Reading Loss/Gain

Status	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
C	30	2.4	8.7004	1.5885	-11	22
S	16	-4.0625	11.3869	2.8467	-26	11
Diff (1-2)		6.4625	9.7002	3.0029		

Status	Method	Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
C		2.4	-0.8488	5.6488	8.7004	6.929	11.696
S		-4.0625	-10.1302	2.0052	11.3869	8.4116	17.6235
Diff (1-2)	Pooled	6.4625	0.4106	12.5144	9.7002	8.0304	12.2533
Diff (1-2)	Satterthwaite	6.4625	-0.2575	13.1825			

Method	Variances	DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
Pooled	Equal	44	2.15	0.0369
Satterthwaite	Unequal	24.563	1.98	0.0587

Equality of Variances

Method	Num DF	Den DF	F Value	Pr > F
Folded F	15	29	1.71	0.2084

Finally, the investigator completed the same analysis using the results from 1 year after being in the program to the second year. This assisted in determining if participating in the program for 2 years would have a possible impact on summer learning loss in reading as assessed by MAP.

These data show another significant difference in summer reading gain/loss. The sample group showed a loss of 4.0625 mean points. The control group gained a mean of .2.4 points. This was a 6.4625 point difference between the two groups. Students in the sample group experienced significant loss compared to the control group. The standard deviation for the control group was 8.7004 and the standard error was 1.5885. The standard deviation of the sample group was 11.3869 and the standard error was 8.4116. It is important to note again the large increases and decreases by single students. The largest decrease in score by the same student in the control group was 11 points and the largest increase by one student in the control group was 22 points. The largest decrease in score by one student in the sample group was 26 points and the largest increase by one student in the sample group was 11 points.

The second research question was to what extent did participation in this program increase reading motivation and student perception of the value of reading as measured by the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile. A matched-pair t test was used to analyze the results of the student data. Students took the survey three times – once at the beginning of the program, once in the fall after the first summer of the program, and then again a year later, after receiving books for 2 consecutive years. The survey was 20 questions in length and the questions were broken into two groups – one to determine the students' self-concept (motivation) as a reader and the other to determine the value they place on reading. The two subsets of scores combined to give an overall score on the survey. Table 8 shows the results of the data analysis comparing the results of the first survey administration to the second administration.

Table 8

Full Survey First to Second Survey Administration

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
9	-9.4737	8.5594	1.9637	-25	6

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
-9.4737	-13.5992	-5.3482	8.5594	6.4676	12.6578

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
18	4.82	0.0001

Table 8 shows the results of the full survey and includes the time from the first survey administration to the second survey administration. Nineteen students completed the full survey each administration. The data show a 9.4737 drop in the overall mean score. The t value was a 4.82 and it was a significant drop in the score. The standard deviation was 8.5594 and the standard error was 1.9637. It is important to note the minimum losses/gains as they represent a very wide range. The results indicated that students scored lower after participating in the program for one summer.

Table 9

Motivation to Read First to Second Survey Administration

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
19	-7.0526	4.4656	1.0245	-15	0

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
-7.0526	-9.205	-4.9003	4.4656	3.3743	6.6038

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
18	-6.88	<.0001

Table 9 shows the results after analyzing the motivation to read component of the full survey. It encompasses the time from the first survey administration to the second survey administration. The students showed a mean loss of 7.0526 on this subsection of the survey. The t value = -6.88. The standard deviation was 4.4656 and the standard error was 1.0245. This is a significant loss. It is important again to note the minimum and maximum losses. These data show that students showed a lower motivation to read after being in the program for one summer.

Table 10

Value of Reading First to Second Survey Administration

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
19	-2.4211	5.6304	1.2917	-11	9

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
-2.4211	-5.1348	0.2927	5.6304	4.2544	8.3264

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
18	-1.87	0.0772

Table 10 shows the results of the value of the importance of reading subsection of the full survey. It encompasses the time frame from the first administration to the second administration of the survey. Nineteen students completed the full subsection for both survey administrations. The students demonstrated a mean loss of 2.4211 points. The t value was -1.87. The standard deviation was 5.6304 and the standard error was 1.2917. This was not a significant loss. The results of the analysis indicated that students placed a lower value on the importance of reading after participating in the program for one summer.

Table 11

Full Survey Second to Third Survey Administration

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
21	-5.7143	18.8577	4.1151	-51	10

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
-5.7143	-14.2982	2.8697	18.8577	14.4273	27.2319

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
20	-1.39	0.1802

Table 11 shows the results of the data analysis on the full survey. However, this now compares the results of the second to the third survey administration. Twenty-one students were included in this analysis. The students demonstrated a mean loss of 5.7143 points. This t value was -1.39. This is not a significant loss. It is important to note the very wide range on the minimum and maximum losses/gains. The largest loss was 51 points while the largest gain was 10 points. The data indicate that students scored lower after participating in the program from the first year to the second year.

Table 12

Self-Concept (Motivation) Second to Third Survey Administration

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
21	-2.5714	9.5004	2.0732	-25	7

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
-2.5714	-6.8959	1.7531	9.5004	7.2683	13.7192

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
20	-1.24	0.2292

Table 12 shows the results of the motivation subsection of the survey. It encompasses the time from the second to third survey administration. Students demonstrated a mean loss of 2.5714 points. This is not a significant loss. The t value was -1.24. It is important to note the large difference between the student with the largest loss in points and the student with the largest gain in points. There is a 32-point range. The data indicate that students placed a lower value on motivation to read from the first year to the second year of the program.

Table 13

Value of Reading Second to Third Survey Administration

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
21	-2.5714	9.5004	2.0732	-25	7

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
-2.5714	-6.8959	1.7531	9.5004	7.2683	13.7192

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
20	-1.24	0.2292

Table 13 shows the results from the value of reading subsection on the full survey. Students on average lost a mean of 2.5714 points on this subsection. This was not a significant loss. The t value was -1.24. The data indicate that students placed a lower value on the importance of reading from the second administration of the survey to the conclusion of the program. This did not represent a significant loss. In an effort to delve deeper into selected questions, a matched-pair t test was used on selected survey questions. These questions and the analysis of each are listed below.

Question 9

I am
a. A poor reader
b. An o.k. reader
c. A good reader
d. A very good reader

Table 14

Question 9

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
23	0.2609	0.6192	0.1291	-1	2

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
0.2609	-0.00689	0.5286	0.6192	0.4789	0.8764

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
22	2.02	0.0557

Twenty-three students answered question nine for each survey administration. There was a mean increase of 0.2609 points with a standard error of 0.1291. The results from the analysis of question nine show that students felt they became better readers over the course of the program. The t score = 2.02 and $P < .05$. The results were not significant but they were extremely close to the threshold.

Question 14

I think reading

a. is a boring way to spend time
b. is an o.k. way to spend time
c. is an interesting way to spend time
d. a great was to spend time

Table 15

Question 14

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
22	0	0.6172	0.1316	-2	1

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
0	-0.2737	0.2737	0.6172	0.4749	0.882

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
21	0	1

There were 22 students who answered this question for each survey administration. There was not a change in the mean score with a standard error of 0.1316. The t value = 0. The results from the analysis of this question indicate that there was not a change in how students view time spent reading.

Question 2

Reading a book is something I like to do

a. Never
b. Not very often
c. Sometimes
d. Often

Table 16

Question 2

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
23	0.2609	1.0098	0.2106	-2	2

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
0.2609	-0.1758	0.6976	1.0098	0.781	1.4293

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
22	1.24	0.2284

Twenty-three students answered question two for each survey administration. There was a mean increase of .2609 points with a standard error of 0.2106 points. The t score was 1.24 and P > .05. The increase in mean score was not significant. The results indicate that students did not significantly improve on how they viewed their desire to read.

Question 8

People who read a lot are

a. very interesting
b. interesting
c. not very interesting
d. boring

Table 17

Question 8

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
19	-0.9474	1.5802	0.3625	-3	3

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
-0.9474	-1.709	-0.1857	1.5802	1.194	2.3369

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
18	-2.61	0.0176

Nineteen students answered this question on each survey administration. There was a mean decrease of 0.9474 points with a standard error of 0.3625. The t score was -2.61 and P <.05. The decrease in the mean score was significant for this question.

Question 15

Reading is

a. very easy for me
b. kind of easy for me
c. kind of hard for me
d. very hard for me

Table 18

Question 15

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
22	-1.7727	1.1098	0.2366	-3	1

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
-1.7727	-2.2648	-1.2807	1.1098	0.8538	1.5859

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
21	-7.49	<.0001

Twenty-two students answered this question on each survey administration. There was a mean loss of 1.7727 points with a standard error of 0.2366. The t score was -7.49 and P <.05. The mean loss of points was significant for this question indicating students felt reading became harder for them during this time frame.

Question 17

When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I

a. almost never talk about my ideas
b. sometimes talk about my ideas
c. almost always talk about my ideas
d. always talk about my ideas

Table 19

Question 17

N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Minimum	Maximum
22	-0.0455	1.0455	0.2229	-2	2

Mean	95% CL Mean		Std Dev	95% CL Std Dev	
-0.0455	-0.509	0.4181	1.0455	0.8044	1.4941

DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
21	-0.2	0.8404

Twenty-two students answered this question on each survey administration. There was a mean loss of 0.0455 points with a standard error of 0.2229 points. The t score was -0.2 and P > .05. This loss was not significant.

Summary

The data analysis did not support the anticipated outcomes. There are many potential reasons for this and they will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. There was no significant difference in the summer learning loss/gain for the control and sample group for the summer when they moved from fifth grade to sixth grade. However, there was a significant difference the following summer in summer learning loss. The students in the sample group lost a mean of 5.75 points and the control group showed a gain of .8929 RIT points on the reading portion of MAP assessment which was used to determine summer learning loss or gain. There was also a significant difference between the two groups from the seventh- to eighth-grade summer. This was their second and final year participating in the summer reading program at the school. The

students in the sample group lost a mean of 4.0625 points and students in the control group gained 2.4 points.

The data analysis from the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile survey also mostly did not support the anticipated outcomes. It is important to note that there was not a control group for the survey, which resulted in there not being a comparison or control group for this portion of the program evaluation. Students in the program demonstrated a significant loss in points on the full survey from the first to second administration. There was a significant drop in points on the motivation to read section of the survey. There was not a significant drop or gain in points on the value of reading portion of the survey from the first to second administration of the survey. While there was a mean loss on the full motivation and value reading portions for the survey from the second to third administration, they were not significant.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Students often lose academic ground over the course of the summer break from school. The effect is multiplied over time and it widens the achievement gap among students as students from low socioeconomic families experience a larger loss of learning over the summer (Heyns, 1978). While the research on summer learning loss is clear and established, there is not a wealth of research on what can be done to mitigate this loss (Alexander et al., 2007a). Schools across the nation are grappling with the reality of improving the test scores of all students and ensuring they reach certain benchmarks set by the No Child Left Behind legislation.

This program evaluation evaluated a voluntary summer reading program that aims to reduce or eliminate summer learning loss in reading as measured by the reading portion of the South Carolina version of the MAP assessment. The study also evaluated if student participation in the program increases reading motivation and student perception of reading value as measured by the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile survey which has two groupings, one that measures self-concept as a reader and another that measures the perception of the value of reading.

It is important to note that there are other theories of what causes summer learning loss. Many of these theories focus on lack of opportunities for learning in the summer for children living in poverty. This includes the lack of opportunities such as going to museums, visiting historical sites, and similar activities. However, the faculty of the school decided access to books was something they could control so they decided to focus on this theory of why learning loss may occur in the summer.

Discussion

In an effort to close this economic summer achievement gap, the school faculty decided to create a program to keep students engaged in reading over the summer. This study is a program evaluation of that program. In a 2004 study, researchers found that students who read four or five books over the summer could prevent summer learning loss (Allington et al., 2010). The school faculty in this study also hoped giving students books for the creation of or addition to their home library would increase their motivation to read. The research questions of this study were to determine the following:

1. To what extent is guaranteed access to books associated with reducing summer learning loss in reading, as measured by MAP?

2. To what extent did participation in this program increase reading motivation and student perception of the value of reading, as measured by the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile?

The independent variable in the first research question was providing access to books. Conceptually, the idea was to ensure that students have access to books. This eliminated the issue of students not having access to books at home. Operationally, students were chosen based on teacher recommendation on the basis of being identified as reluctant readers. This was done in an attempt to prevent a high-performing reader or a student who already loved reading from skewing the outcomes of the study. The program also focused on students living in poverty. Eighty-three percent of the students in the program qualified for the free/reduced lunch program at the school. This measure is often used in schools to determine whether or not a child is living in poverty.

The dependent variable was the student's test score on the MAP. Conceptually, the idea was to determine the amount of summer learning loss experienced by the

students who were given books the previous spring. Operationally, the spring (end of school year) reading score was compared to the student's score on the following school year's fall (beginning of school year) reading score. This measurement of progress occurred in each year of the 2-year program. The reading RIT scores on the MAP assessment of the sample group of students were then compared to the control group. This provided a comparison to determine if access to books effected summer learning loss or gain based on MAP scores.

The independent variable in the second research question was providing access to books. Conceptually, the idea was to ensure that students have access to books. This eliminated the issue of students not having access to books at home. The dependent variable for the second question was the student's score on the reading inventory that would determine their attitude and motivation towards reading. Conceptually, the idea was to determine if providing the books would develop a stronger sense of being a confident reader in the student. Operationally, the student's score on the reading inventory administered in the spring was compared to the student's score on the same inventory administered in the spring of the following school year.

Implications of Findings

The first research question was designed to determine the extent to which guaranteed access to books is associated with reducing summer learning loss in reading as measured by MAP. A control group was created as a comparison group to the sample group. These students were matched on several demographic categories and reading scores on the MAP assessment upon entering the program. The entering assessment scores had to be within a 10-point range of the sample group. The two different groups of students did not show a significant difference in summer learning loss or gain from

their fifth-grade to sixth-grade school year. This was 1 year previous to program participation. These data provide evidence of summer learning before entering the summer reading program.

However, there was a significant difference between the groups regarding summer learning loss after participating in the program for 1 year. The control group actually showed a slight gain in reading while the sample group demonstrated a 5.75 point loss in reading over the summer. When the data were analyzed from the subsequent summer, similar results were found. Students in the control group showed a slight increase in reading while the control group demonstrated another loss in reading over the summer.

According to the data analyzed, the students who participated in the summer reading program fared worse than the control group. There can be a variety of reasons for this. This reading program did not provide any additional support for the students. The results of this program evaluation differ from the results from the Allington et al. (2010) study. This study also looked at providing guaranteed access to books but on a much larger and longer scale. The study by Allington et al. found statistically significant differences in the performances of the control and treatment groups on the FCAT. The findings of this paper in regards to eliminating summer learning loss stand in direct contrast to the large-scale study conducted by Allington et al.

However, there have been other studies of summer reading programs that guaranteed access to books and provided student supports as part of the program. One study found that as the support and scaffolding the student received increased, growth and achievement in reading increased as well (White & Kim, 2008). There have been mixed results from the studies conducted on providing guaranteed access to books.

However, the studies have shown that more support and scaffolding result in increased learning over the summer.

The second research question was designed to determine if participation in this program increases reading motivation and student perception of the value of reading as measured by the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile. This survey was designed to assess motivation to read as well as the perceived value of reading. The scores can also be combined to give a more general view of reading. Students in the program were administered this survey three times. The first administration occurred at the very beginning of the study. The students also completed the survey after the first and second summer of participation. The students showed a drop in score on the overall survey from the first to second administration. This did represent a statistically significant drop in score.

Each of the components of the survey were then analyzed to determine if participation in the program for 1 year impacted reading motivation or perceived value of reading. The students demonstrated a loss, and it was statistically significant. This would suggest that students showed a lower motivation to read after participating in the program for 1 year. There was not a significant difference in scores on the value of reading portion of the survey. The results did not show a significant difference in value of reading from the start of the program to the second survey administration.

The scores of the survey from the second to third administration were then compared. The full survey, as well as the two portions of the survey, did not show a significant difference from the second to third survey administration. To provide a deeper look into the second research question, two questions were studied in greater detail. The questions were:

Question 9

I am
a. A poor reader
b. An o.k. reader
c. A good reader
d. A very good reader

Question 10

I think reading
a. is a boring way to spend time
b. is an o.k. way to spend time
c. is an interesting way to spend time
d. a great way to spend time

These questions are very similar to the overall purpose of the two portions of the reading survey. They are very specific and directly relate to determining how students see themselves as readers and how they value reading. Students showed a slight gain of 0.2609 points on question nine. This was not a significant difference, but it was extremely close to the threshold. This is a positive sign for the summer reading program the school faculty created as it shows students felt they improved as readers from the start to the finish of the program on a practical level. There was not a significant change in the results of question 10.

The data analysis of this summer reading program did not support the anticipated outcomes. There are a variety of reasons discussed in this chapter that may have impacted the results. Students who participated in the summer reading program fared significantly worse on the comparison of MAP scores that were used to determine summer learning loss. In regards to the second research question, there were more mixed results. Students demonstrated a significant decrease from the first to second survey administration on the full survey and the motivation portion of the study. There was not a significant gain or loss in any of the other survey data analyzed.

In comparing this researcher's findings to others, one study showed an increase in positive attitudes toward reading with the effects lasting long after program completion (McTague & Abrams, 2011). The results from the current program evaluation differ from these findings. Another study found that as students got older, they placed less value on reading and their motivation to read declined as well (Kelley & Decker, 2009). This is similar to the results found in this program evaluation. Student choice in books has been found to be critical in promoting reading motivation (Moley, Bandre, & George, 2011). While this program did include student choice of books, it did not see the same benefit of increasing motivation as the previous researchers' findings.

Limitations

This study does present several limitations. This program evaluation was focused on determining if providing guaranteed access to books eliminates or reduces summer learning loss and if participation in the program increased student motivation to read and value placed on reading. The overall size of the study was small in size. This was mainly due to budget constraints the school faculty and leadership had when deciding on a course of action. Only 30 students started in the program. This makes it more difficult to generalize the findings from this study.

This study relies on students being honest while they answer the questions. Students were given ample time and a distraction-free environment to complete the surveys, but the study still relies on the students' decisions to answer the questions honestly. All of the students completed the survey in the same room and at the same time which could have impacted the way they responded to the questions. The study relied on student test scores to answer the first research question. This assumes students gave their best effort on the assessment. While all of the students in the school took the MAP

assessment, it was up to the student to give each assessment their best effort. While analyzing the maximum losses and gains from MAP administration to MAP administration, it does appear some students did not take the test seriously each time. In a small group such as this sample group, these large swings in scores certainly impact the outcomes of the analysis.

The students in the control group did not complete the reading surveys. Since the control group did not complete the surveys, there was not a comparison group for the survey results. It would have been more powerful to be able to compare not only the increases or decreases of individual students but these differences among the groups. It would be interesting to see if both groups experienced the same declines. Students in middle school often have poor self-images and motivations, and if there was a control group it would be easier to determine if these contextual factors impacted the scores on the surveys.

Recommendations

The results of this program evaluation point to the need for further studies. While some literature exists on programs designed to eliminate summer learning loss, there is a need for more research in this area. As examined deeply in the literature review, summer learning loss is a real threat to students, especially students living in poverty. Further studies need to continue to look at specific interventions that may negate summer learning loss. District and school leaders need guidance on the effectiveness of programs to combat summer learning loss. The existing studies show mixed results which makes the need for further research even more pressing.

Further studies should focus on how motivation impacts reading. Based on the literature review presented in Chapter 2, motivation plays a large role in adolescent

reading. Future studies should attempt to isolate what motivates students to read and then use those factors to determine the impact on reading achievement. Motivation to read can be attributed to a multitude of factors such as previous success in reading, student choice, confidence, and affiliation. If future researchers were able to isolate the factors that impact reading motivation the most, it would allow for more focused and successful interventions. This information would be invaluable to practitioners as they attempt to address summer learning loss.

This study lasted over the course of two summers. Further studies should be longer and include more years of previous testing data. This would provide a more long-range view of the research questions. Students should also be administered the surveys in an individual setting. Peer pressure is prevalent among middle school students and being in the same room may certainly impact how they answer the survey questions. In-depth, personal interviews with each student would possibly provide better insight as to how the student felt he/she developed as a reader throughout the program. Finally, student testing data showed very large swings in achievement from test administration to test administration. This can indicate a lack of effort or seriousness on the student's part while taking the test. With a small sample group, this can have a profound impact on overall scores. Future studies should attempt to find or develop a different method of measuring achievement.

Further studies should also modify the amount of support provided in addition to providing guaranteed access to books. The current literature is mixed and could be bolstered by more studies. The amount of additional support given to students changes the outcome in regards to summer learning loss. However, it is not clear how much support is actually needed. If school practitioners were provided with solid research on

the amount of additional supports needed, they would be able to better utilize funding for summer learning programs. This would potentially impact student achievement.

Summary

This program evaluation was designed to answer two research questions. The first research question addressed summer learning loss in reading and the second addressed student motivation to read and the value students placed on reading. In contrast to the anticipated outcomes, students in the sample group performed worse on the achievement tests than the control group. However, there were several factors discussed previously in this chapter that may have impacted the results. The findings on the results of the survey were mixed. While students generally demonstrated significant losses from the first to second survey administration, there were no significant differences from the second to third survey administrations. The results of this program evaluation show that further studies are needed on the issue of how school leaders can design and implement programs to eliminate summer learning loss in reading.

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Appendix A

Permission to Use the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile

Dear Mike,
You are welcome to use the AMRP for your program review. Thank you for thinking of our work. Best of luck with the project.

Regards,
Lettie
Lettie K. Albright, PhD Professor of Literacy
Texas Woman's University - Department of Reading
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940.898.2045 940.898.2224 (f)

From: Michael Waiksnis [MWaiksni@rhmail.org]
Sent: Saturday, June 01, 2013 5:11 PM
To: Albright, Lettie
Subject: AMRP question

Good afternoon,
My name is Michael Waiksnis and I am the principal of Sullivan Middle School in Rock Hill, S.C. I am also working on my doctoral degree at Gardner Webb University. I am requesting permission to use the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile in a program review I hope to conduct. It is a program that is hoping to address summer reading slide. Thank you and I look forward to your response or further instruction.

Appendix B

Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey

Figure 1
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

Sample 1: I am in _____.
- ❑ Sixth grade
- ❑ Seventh grade
- ❑ Eighth grade
- ❑ Ninth grade
- ❑ Tenth grade
- ❑ Eleventh grade
- ❑ Twelfth grade

Sample 2: I am a _____.
- ❑ Female
- ❑ Male

Sample 3: My race/ethnicity is _____.
- ❑ African-American
- ❑ Asian/Asian American
- ❑ Caucasian
- ❑ Hispanic
- ❑ Native American
- ❑ Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic
- ❑ Other: Please specify _____

1. My friends think I am _____.
   - ❑ a very good reader
   - ❑ a good reader
   - ❑ an OK reader
   - ❑ a poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.
   - ❑ Never
   - ❑ Not very often
   - ❑ Sometimes
   - ❑ Often

3. I read _____.
   - ❑ not as well as my friends
   - ❑ about the same as my friends
   - ❑ a little better than my friends
   - ❑ a lot better than my friends

4. My best friends think reading is _____.
   - ❑ really fun
   - ❑ fun
   - ❑ OK to do
   - ❑ no fun at all

5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can _____.
   - ❑ almost always figure it out
   - ❑ sometimes figure it out
   - ❑ almost never figure it out
   - ❑ never figure it out

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.
   - ❑ I never do this
   - ❑ I almost never do this
   - ❑ I do this some of the time
   - ❑ I do this a lot

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand _____.
   - ❑ almost everything I read
   - ❑ some of what I read
   - ❑ almost none of what I read
   - ❑ none of what I read

8. People who read a lot are _____.
   - ❑ very interesting
   - ❑ interesting
   - ❑ not very interesting
   - ❑ boring

9. I am _____.
   - ❑ a poor reader
   - ❑ an OK reader
   - ❑ a good reader
   - ❑ a very good reader

(continued)

Figure 1 (continued)
Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

10. I think libraries are _____.
- ❑ a great place to spend time
- ❑ an interesting place to spend time
- ❑ an OK place to spend time
- ❑ a boring place to spend time

11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____.
- ❑ every day
- ❑ almost every day
- ❑ once in a while
- ❑ never

12. Knowing how to read well is _____.
- ❑ not very important
- ❑ sort of important
- ❑ important
- ❑ very important

13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I _____.
- ❑ can never think of an answer
- ❑ have trouble thinking of an answer
- ❑ sometimes think of an answer
- ❑ always think of an answer

14. I think reading is _____.
- ❑ a boring way to spend time
- ❑ an OK way to spend time
- ❑ an interesting way to spend time
- ❑ a great way to spend time

15. Reading is _____.
- ❑ very easy for me
- ❑ kind of easy for me
- ❑ kind of hard for me
- ❑ very hard for me

16. As an adult, I will spend _____.
- ❑ none of my time reading
- ❑ very little time reading
- ❑ some of my time reading
- ❑ a lot of my time reading

17. When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I _____.
- ❑ almost never talk about my ideas
- ❑ sometimes talk about my ideas
- ❑ almost always talk about my ideas
- ❑ always talk about my ideas

18. I would like for my teachers to read out loud in my classes _____.
- ❑ every day
- ❑ almost every day
- ❑ once in a while
- ❑ never

19. When I read out loud I am a _____.
- ❑ poor reader
- ❑ OK reader
- ❑ good reader
- ❑ very good reader

20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _____.
- ❑ very happy
- ❑ sort of happy
- ❑ sort of unhappy
- ❑ unhappy

Note. Adapted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996)